

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE SECOND PART.

CHAPTER I. MAIL-DAY.

THE announcement that Dr. Rosslyn wanted to speak to her, was one which Lilius Merivale had not been able to hear with entire composure, at any time since she had been of sufficient importance for him to speak to her in any special way. Only rarely since the business attendant upon her arrival at years of discretion had been completed had her stepfather summoned her to a private interview; but on those few occasions she experienced a sensation for which she blamed herself severely, and she had always looked in the glass before she obeyed his summons, to see whether her tell-tale face was likely to betray her. All this apprehension and reluctance was purely disinterested. On her own account, and in connection with her own conduct, Lilius had nothing to fear or to deprecate. The "good-child" tradition of her nursery, the "good-girl" record of her schoolroom days, were continued now that she was a free agent in her narrow world; if her heart sank, her temples beat, and her knees felt unpleasantly weak, when the unspeakably correct Morrison ceremoniously conveyed to her "Dr. Rosslyn's compliments and could she oblige him by stepping down to the study"—this was Morrison's rendering of "Tell Miss Merivale I want to see her"—it was not because she expected to be questioned or scolded on any personal score. Her neatly-kept and accurately-balanced accounts did not more satisfactorily record her financial

solvency, than did the clearness of her conscience testify to the harmlessness of her monotonous life.

If Lilius had been transported to the Palace of Truth, she need not have feared any more grave revelation than that of her being occasionally weary of Mrs. Norton and her anecdotes of the aristocracy (as represented by an Hon. Mrs. Something, who had employed her in distributing tracts in a neighbourhood where food was at a permanent minimum), but more frequently tired of herself, from a persistent consciousness that she was of no vital importance to anybody.

It was because she always had a misgiving that Dr. Rosslyn was going to say something about Hugh which it would pain her to hear, that Lilius approached a conference with her stepfather with nervousness. She had gradually grown into the position of confidante of both, in so far as the mutual relations of the two were concerned, and it was anything but an easy or pleasant one. Dr. Rosslyn assumed, as a matter of course, that so sensible a girl as Lilius, one who did so much credit to her rational and proper bringing-up, must regard Hugh's departure from the paths of discretion and good taste, in preferring the unclassed position of an artist to the defined respectability of a member of one of the learned professions, precisely as it was regarded by Dr. Rosslyn himself. On the other hand Hugh was aware that he had all her sympathies, and, although he could have wished that they were more discriminating—that, for instance, she had stopped short of regarding him as the equal of Turner, he valued them very highly. Without Lilius, Harley Street would have been intolerable to Hugh; but it had not greatly troubled his content, when starting upon his travels, that Harley

Street without him would be rather "hard lines" for her.

The time at which Liliás might again begin to watch for the letter-carrier, bringing her the continuation of the story of which Hugh's last letter had told her the beginning, had now come. The interval was the hardest to get through that Liliás had ever known; much harder even than those first weeks after he left England, when she had to think of each day as widening the distance between herself and Hugh, and to get used to the void created by his absence. It had been harder, because it was filled with unshared and unavowed anxiety and suspense. She studied the arrivals and departures of the West Indian mails with eager attention, and yet when, a full day before she would have been justified in expecting to hear from Hugh, she was informed by Morrison that Dr. Rosslyn wished to see her in the study, her heart sank, her head throbbed, and her knees grew weak, just as if it were possible that her stepfather had received news, and was about to reproach her with her concealed knowledge. She was unable to render the instantaneous obedience to Dr. Rosslyn's summons that he always expected, for she had to control the outward signs of the discomposure it had caused, and she went down to the study expecting to be met with a frown preliminary at all events.

She had, however, no frown to encounter. Dr. Rosslyn greeted her pleasantly, and set a chair for her near his own. There were letters on the table before him, but Liliás could see that none of them came from foreign parts.

"It is not Hugh!" she said to herself, with a little sigh of relief.

"Business, my dear," said Dr. Rosslyn; "business of your own, on which I have to consult you."

"To consult me, papa? You have always settled everything for me, hitherto, and I know so little about business."

"That is what all women say, Liliás, and they seem to regard their ignorance as a pretty feminine accomplishment, instead of a foolish fault to be corrected. You know quite enough to understand what I am going to explain to you. It concerns Lislee."

Dr. Rosslyn then proceeded to inform Liliás that he had received an eligible offer for a small country place forming a part of her own property, and which had been let for a term of years, recently expired.

The person who now proposed to take it was a retired Indian officer, not personally known to Dr. Rosslyn.

Liliás listened to her stepfather's explanation with proper attention, but no great interest. She was thinking that by this time to-morrow Hugh's letter would have reached her, and she should know how things were with him.

"Colonel Courtland would be a good tenant, I have no doubt," Dr. Rosslyn continued. "Military men are generally orderly in their ways, and, when they do take to a country life, they make first-rate potterers. The chief difficulty will be the length of time he wants the place for. You would not care to have it out of your hands for very long, would you?"

"Why not, papa? We shall never live at Lislee, I suppose."

"That I shall never live at Lislee is tolerably certain, but I don't think that you ought to relinquish the place for a long term for that reason. You may wish to live in your own house under other circumstances than your present ones. You have a future apart from mine, my dear."

It was so unlike Dr. Rosslyn to speak to her thus, that Liliás was embarrassed. With the quickness of apprehension that accompanies very keen feeling, a fear flashed into her mind that his medical knowledge had revealed to the doctor something threatening in his own state of health, and that his allusion was to a time when she should be left without him. At the idea her cheek grew pale, and her eyes filled with sudden tears.

"What is the matter?" asked Dr. Rosslyn. "Why are you ready to cry? You must surely have thought sometimes of the probability of your marrying?"

The threatening tears were arrested by one of those lovely smiles which gave the face of Liliás so great a charm, and she answered with relief:

"Oh, is that all! I really don't think I ever have speculated upon that event, papa."

"Then you are a very uncommon young person," returned Dr. Rosslyn dryly, and with a good-humoured nod. "But as such things do happen, it is well they should be taken into consideration, and you know, my dear, your husband might like to have a nice country house."

"To come down to out of the clouds, where he certainly lives at present, papa?"

"Just so. On the whole, then, I think you had better let me say to Colonel

Courtland that you do not propose to let Lislee for more than three years. It will always let, and by this arrangement you will be free to dispose of it as you think best."

"Of course you are right, papa. Does Colonel Courtland wish to take the house at once?"

Dr. Rosslyn referred to a letter.

"He wishes for a decision at your earliest convenience, but does not say anything about the time at which he would require to occupy the house."

"I asked," said Lillias, hesitating, "because I have often wished to see Lislee. Mamma lived there once, did she not?"

"Yes."

"Hugh and I have often talked of going to see it. If the new people do not want to come in soon, we might go down there when he comes home."

"Yes, you might do that. But, unless Hugh is thinking of coming home almost immediately, it would be better that you should not wait until he comes; for it is not likely these people will make much delay. They will probably want to have the end of the summer at Lislee. Now, I know nothing of his intentions; do you?"

"I—I don't know anything decided," answered Lillias in pitiable confusion, which Dr. Rosslyn ignored; "but he always talked of six or eight months."

"And he has been away seven. Well, then, I suppose we may look for him in a couple of months at latest. If I find that Colonel Courtland does not want the house immediately, you can wait for Hugh; but if he does, you had better take Mrs. Norton with you, and go down to Choughton for a couple of days."

"Shall you know about Colonel Courtland soon?"

"In a day or two, I should think. He writes from Chester, but is coming up to town at once."

After a little more talk, Dr. Rosslyn dismissed Lillias, who left him with a more free and happy feeling than she had experienced since the day on which Hugh's letter had for the first time given her something to conceal.

After she had left him, Dr. Rosslyn bestowed some consideration upon the demeanour of Lillias. He had caught the meaning of those signs of feeling which he had not noticed in words, and they touched a chord of memory in his breast which was ever ready to be awakened. How like her mother she had looked, with the sudden

tears trembling in her brown eyes! And for a cause that would have called tears to those closed eyes also—the easily struck fancy, the easily touched feelings. And for him, too! Lillias was a good girl, and she behaved well to him, but the idea that she really loved him had not previously occurred to Dr. Rosslyn. He had neither known nor cared, since her mother could no longer love him, how he stood with any of his fellow-creatures, outside of his professional relations with a limited number of them. Then he thought of her confusion when he spoke of Hugh's return. If, indeed, this child of his dead wife—so like her in face, and form, and voice, that he sometimes shrank from her because he could not bear the likeness, which aroused the old grief and set it to gnaw his heart afresh—was also like her in the heart that he had not thought of, and the mind that he had not investigated, the future he dreamed of for his wayward son would be a bright and enviable one. With a bitter sigh he said to himself, "If Hugh has such good fortune as that, I hope it may last!" and he turned to his work in a mood of very unusual sympathy and softness.

Dr. Rosslyn was an unlikely person to weave projects for other people's fulfilling, and he estimated, with the moderation taught by experience, the probabilities of human affairs going as those concerned with them wished them to go. Lillias had been right in believing that he had formed a wish with regard to his son's marriage; but it had never crossed her mind what that wish was. He did not, however, build upon this; he had been already severely disappointed in Hugh, and it might just as easily happen that; having passed by the reputable, recognised, and lucrative professions that were open to his choice, and adopted the idle and profitless calling of a painter; he would now pass by the supreme good which the gods had provided for him, and select a wife on the same principle that had ruled his choice of a career. If Hugh did this, if he married among the people who were his chosen associates, taking to wife a woman who sang, or acted, or danced, or wrote, or in any mode made herself conspicuous—for all these modes were equally objectionable to Dr. Rosslyn's thinking—then he must go his own way, and shape the ends of his own destiny with tools of his own making. With a conspicuous daughter-in-law Dr. Rosslyn would have nothing to do.

Hugh had never given him any reason

for a foreboding of this kind; but a habit of talking with exaggerated admiration of the female notabilities of the time was one of Hugh's protests against the Harley Street standard. If Dr. Rosslyn had ever given utterance to Liliass to a misgiving on the point, she could have set it at rest very easily, for was she not in possession of the ideal portrait of the only person to whom Hugh would ever give his heart? and was not that ideal portrait totally unlike any of the conspicuous order of women? That it was also totally unlike Liliass herself would have struck Dr. Rosslyn with equal force; but he had never spoken a word upon the subject to her.

Hugh's travels were much less unsatisfactory to his father than his general doings. Dr. Rosslyn cherished the unavowed belief that the "artist craze" was only a temporary aberration, and that a larger experience would cure it; and he also regarded Hugh's absence from Liliass as a good thing. He would get out of the way of regarding her as a sister, but would care for her none the less; and, when he came back to find her as deeply interested as any Desdemona in his foreign doings, their renewed companionship would have all the spice of novelty.

So, on this day, Liliass left Dr. Rosslyn in a fool's paradise, and immediately set about constructing one for her own habitation. She had thought incessantly over Hugh's last communication, and the passage of time had not allayed her anxiety, or shaken her conviction that a breach between his father and himself must result from what he had told her. But, for the first time, she had conceived a hope that she herself would count for something in the trouble that must needs arise if Hugh refused to take the warning she had sent him. It was not in anything Dr. Rosslyn had said that she placed this new trust, but in his way of consulting her. This had so exhilarating an effect upon her that she wished she might have ventured to disregard the postscript of Hugh's letter, for she felt that she could now have spoken with effect to his father on his behalf. And then she had a vision of her pretty country house, but with Hugh for its master. That very unromantic person, her stepfather, had indulged in some such thoughts while he was talking to her; but with what a difference! Liliass tried to represent to herself the radiantly beautiful girl whom the artist-lover had sketched, with her "foreign" ways and speech, reigning in the

English home; and she added a humble little figure to the picture—her own.

That was one of their quiet evenings in Harley Street. Mrs. Norton worked at her tatting; an art in which she excelled, and which she regarded as the most elegant of the minor accomplishments, greatly priding herself on the slim delicacy of the hands so favourably displayed by the shuttle and mesh. The pug snored. Liliass felt the evening very quiet indeed. The season was at its height, and there was a constant dull sound of traffic in the distance. To have had the lamps in and drawn the curtains early, would have been better than to sit in the warmth and light of the summer evening, with nothing to look out on from the front windows but Harley Street, and nothing to look out on from the back windows but the leads, and the dustiest strip of burnt clay and brown chips that ever ventured to call itself a back garden.

Liliass was not inclined for music, and when she resorted to reading it was only a pretext to avoid the equable flow of Mrs. Norton's uninteresting discourse. Long-established custom and her natural amiability enabled her to bear this in a general way without minding it much, and this evening she blamed herself for her impatience. To-morrow she should be quite herself again; it was only because she had to wait for Hugh's letter until the morning that she felt the time so long, and was so idle and irritable. She wished it had been the night of the Thorntons' party, or that Dr. Rosslyn had not dined out.

At last the evening wore itself away, and Liliass escaped to her own room and the solitude in which suspense is most endurable. The weather was sultry; the sky was dark and threatening; there was no wind astir in the big city. Liliass's room was large, and had an air of old-fashioned comfort; but it was dull, like all the other rooms in the house, and not in the least like a young girl's "own" room. A venerable four-poster, stripped, indeed, of its heavy woollen curtains, as a homage to summer, but without any lighter drapery to replace them, occupied a great space, and all the furniture was of heavy mahogany. The tall wax-lights on the dressing-table were insufficient to dispel the gloom. Liliass drew a ponderous armchair to the window, and sat for a long time looking out at the houses opposite, and up at the threatening sky. She had no inclination to sleep, and now that she was alone her nerves were

quieted. The house opposite to Dr. Rosslyn's was brilliantly lighted; the windows were all up, and the drawing-rooms were thronged with dancers. Liliás could see the flitting figures, and the people—some arriving, some departing—as they alighted from or got into their carriages. The scene gave her a strange feeling of loneliness. Presently there came some heavy drops of rain, and all along the line of carriages the servants put on their shining waterproof-capes. In a few minutes more Liliás was driven back from the window by a flash that lighted the whole street with a white glare, and one of the most memorable thunderstorms on record was rolling and flaring over London.

A fairer or more peaceful morning never broke, than that for which Liliás had waited with so much expectation. After the subsidence of the storm she had slept, but she was up long before the letter-carrier's round brought him to the door, where she was waiting.

There was nothing for Liliás!

"Perhaps Hugh has written to papa!" she said to herself, as she re-sorted the letters, over which she had glanced without a misgiving, with only haste to come to her precious own. But there was no foreign letter for Dr. Rosslyn. She put the letters on the hall-table, and went away to recover herself. But the effort was so unsuccessful that when she went down to breakfast Dr. Rosslyn asked her what was the matter with her, and whether she had been upset by the storm. Liliás was beyond the power of availing herself of any such pretext; she burst helplessly into tears as she answered:

"No, no; but there's no letter from Hugh, for either you or me."

"Well, well, my dear," said Dr. Rosslyn, in his unconsciousness of any special reason for her disappointment; "never mind. He will write by the next mail. To be sure," he continued, "it's rather a shame for him to be so lazy, as he did not write by the last. But are you sure this is the day?"

"I am quite sure."

Dr. Rosslyn turned to his Times, and found the mail news.

"Yes," he said, "the West Indian mail is in. They had a collision in the Channel, but were up to time. Hugh has not written. Very inconsiderate of him." He interposed the newspaper between himself and Liliás, and she understood that the incident was closed.

ON REVISITING OLD HAUNTS.

IF we have ever doubted that we are entirely different people at different periods of our lives, let us revisit some well-known spot after a lapse of years, and endeavour to live over again the life of old; to be once more, in fancy, the hopeful lad, or the eager young man, who trod these lanes, or walked quickly along the crowded streets, with his head full of fancies, and his heart beating high with hope—a hope to do something and be something a little better, a little stronger, than the mere ordinary run of human beings, to whom life appears nothing save a space of time to be filled by sleeping, eating, and drinking, and as much amusement as can be snatched from the hand of fortune without too much exertion.

We may return to the familiar woods and pastures, but we look upon them with entirely different eyes, and we see no longer only the view before us, but a thousand other things that convince us that life—even a quiet life, far from the madding crowd—cannot stand still, but rolls on and on like a ceaseless river, carrying all before it out to the silence of some vast and unknown sea.

The most curious part of life, as regards this revisiting of old haunts, is the fact that only by some such an event as this do we recognise how much we have changed. Take, for example, the case of a man who, brought up in the quiet country, is suddenly brought face to face with the necessity for making some effort elsewhere to obtain a living for himself, and, maybe, for those dear to him. He is quite young, very likely, when the crash comes. The land that his fathers have tilled for generations suddenly fails him, and yields its increase no more for him. Mortgages are foreclosed, perhaps, and all at once it becomes necessary to really exert himself, and leave the dear old place, where for centuries the family roots have struck so deeply into the ground, that to move them seems as if it must result in death.

When he wanders over the little estate for the last time, he feels that nowhere else can life have any savour for him. Regretfully he recollects his first fall from yonder apple-tree; his learning to swim in the pond, with a clump of rushes to support him in his efforts, and the old gardener near-by to see he did not drown. Even the horses and cows are known to him for

generations, too; and the flowers in the garden, and the alternating crops in the fields, seem to him to be part and parcel of his own existence. And yet he has to recognise that, when next the swallows return to their mud-houses under the eaves above the bedroom-window where he slept as a tiny child, as a lad, and as a man, he will be far away; only Nature and the old homestead will be the same, and he vows, as he looks his last on the home, that some day—some day he will come back, and, perchance, end his life in the place where it began.

Of course, when the family goes, the whole town turns out to say good-bye. The rector, and the doctor—even the solicitor, who, most likely, is at the bottom of the whole mischief—snatch moments for a last hand-shake; and the labourers with tears in their eyes say that a better master will never be theirs, choose who may come their way and step into the well-worn shoes just cast off.

Let twenty years slowly glide away, perhaps in a bright, beautiful new country, and then let our supposed emigrant return. He has been looking forward to this visit all the time he has been expatriated. At night, when the strange lack of twilight has been felt, he has closed his eyes, and seen again and again the beautiful, dreamy time at home, before night crept over the hills. Once more, as in a vision, the wonderful range of purple hills beyond the low-lying green meadows has risen before him, and he has seen the scarlet fade to a soft pink flush, that in its turn gives place to purple, and finally to a vast flood of grey mist, that always appeared to his childish mind like some great ghostly army of unquiet souls that wandered about the hills at night because they could not rest in the crowded churchyard. He used to watch it fearfully from his attic-window in his very early days. Or, when following big game, he has once more recollected days in the harbour after wild-fowl, or evenings waiting for "flight" along the banks of the river that seemed then such a wide and marvellous stream. And, full of these dreams and recollections, he comes back, to receive the first shock at the station, where no one remembers him, and where he remembers not one face that looks enquiringly into his as he lands once more on the erstwhile familiar platform.

From then until his return his experience consists of a series of shocks; for unchanged as all appears to those who have

never left the place, it is yet full of changes of the worst kind to him who returns to the home of his youth after a long absence in a strange land. In the first place, dreams and fancies, bound by the tenderest affection, have often enough obscured and distorted the entire spot, until it is impossible to say which is true and which is unreal and self-made; and, in the second, death has been silently and diligently at work, and has hewn down so many of the wanderer's dearest friends that the most homelike corner after all of the old place is that space in the churchyard, where one after the other names are discovered that insensibly remind the returned wanderer of a dozen kindly folk who are at rest, and can never more greet him as of old. If even the dead could return, they could scarcely feel worse than does he who revisits his old haunts after a long absence. Once the streets were full of well-known faces, and a walk up and down them meant bows and nods, and stoppings for a few moments' chat over town politics or "happenings" of the most enthralling interest to all the small community. Now no one notices the stranger, save to wonder who and what he is; and as to the politics of the town, the language talked might be Hebrew for all he can understand of the gossip, with which he begins to wonder if he ever could have had anything in common in those old days, that appeared to him so full of interest and delight, and in which he already is beginning to cease to believe.

To the ordinary soul who goes back to a well-known place the shock may not perhaps be quite so severe, but it is a shock nevertheless. We go down the sweet country lane, where not so long ago we were gathering blackberries, the acrid, dusty taste of which—so it seems to us—yet lingers in our mouths; and we gaze over the clematis-wreathed hedge into the orchard, looking out for the children who were wont to come at our whistle to share our walk, and help us gather the spoils. Under the apple-trees the fruit lies in sodden heaps; the walnut-trees bear their green nuts unmolested; the bars at the nursery window are removed; and we recollect with a shudder that the children are there no more, and that they, too, have left the nest and gone out from the sheltered home to do battle for themselves in the wide, wide world beyond the hills. Let no one scoff at ghosts. For nothing is so full of these intangible creatures as an old haunt.

What can it be, if not a ghost, that creeps up to us as we wander again down the avenue, and take a seat under the verandah, and puts its small, cool hand into ours? There is nothing to see—of course not; but here she was a child with us, and here we used to sit, hand-in-hand, watching the circling bats come out from yonder old tree-stump, darting about after the booming cockchafers, and oftentimes frightening us nearly to death when we recollected a legend of the kitchen, which inferred that bats principally loved to entangle themselves in children's hair, or to fasten their claws in the corners of their eyes, the while they flapped their leathery wings, driving mad those who were powerless to disentangle the mystic creatures—half bird, half mouse—from their faces. What else save a spirit shares our dreams, and expects an army of grand and stalwart soldiers to ride over the red causeway, from the ruined castle in the gap, from whence it takes its name? And, finally, what else save a ghost wanders with us in the sweet-scented darkness, and builds wondrous fabrics in the air, where Love shall rule the roast, and always bar out the commonplace world with which we, at all events, can have nothing in common?

Or else let us once more seat ourselves on the oaken bench in yonder northern cathedral, where once we sat, day after day, when the world was young, and faith and trust were real, and had never been tried by doubt and disappointment. It is not the new dean and the surpliced choir that come singing up the exquisite aisle, but a procession of ghosts, that take their seats, and at once lead us back again into that fair, peaceful country, where, we fear, we shall never walk again. Can it be ourselves? we wonder, as mechanically we listen to the beloved chants and the familiar words, who once believed every syllable, and joined in heartily in prayer and psalm. And even as we doubt our identity with that unquestioning soul, we find ourselves on our knees, and almost feel tears in our eyes, and are gently led back into the paths of old. But only for a few minutes; the glamour fades, we recognise that never again can we be the innocent, believing creatures we once really were. And we look up at the beautiful fabric that has seen so many generations and so many forms of worship, and recognise that even it is altered and restored, and is not quite the same as it used to be, for do we not miss a

certain incongruous and laughable gargoyle over the Archbishop's throne, and is not the plaster horn that we always longed to blow vanished, and put somewhere else than in its old position over the third arch above the choir?

There is one old haunt that we can never revisit even now, and see the people who are really present at this annual gathering, for they are all new and unfamiliar, for instead of them we can only perceive those who were wont to greet us there, and who all lie asleep in divers parts of England. It is a most curious, eerie sensation, but one we never lose, for constantly dead faces—expected for these moments, because until lately they never failed us—beam at us through the ever-shifting crowd, and we rise to greet them, scarcely going a pace forward before we recollect that they have passed over the river, and can never smile upon us any more; or we may discover with a start that the son or daughter reproduces the parent, and that our dear old friend's familiar countenance gazes into ours with just enough unfamiliarity about it to make the remembrance a bitter one, because they are no longer here themselves. It is not once, not twice, that these ghost-faces have struck us when we have revisited old haunts. Shadows, too, seem to glide about with us there in the places where nothing else is as it used to be. And now and then we have fancied that they, as disembodied creatures, are wandering as we are in the dear old spots, and are looking, as we are, for the signs that we and they have yet something in common. How else did we see the face of that keen and kindly critic, whose cheery voice and hearty laugh ring in our ears as we write, looking just as he ever used to look, with a cynical yet good-natured smile on his face, at the last development of art, as expounded on the walls of the Academy; and how else did words he only would have uttered come into our minds as we stood there looking at the pictures, feeling sure that in another moment we should turn to greet him in the way we have so often done?

Wandering once more in the place where we lived first, before the world had rough-hewn us into its own conventional pattern, we may chance to meet among other spirits the ghost of the youth or maiden we ourselves once were. Let us gaze steadily in this innocent face, and recognise that among all these different selves we are and

meet during our wanderings, there is none so real or so true as that young creature with whom it seems now impossible we had anything in common, and which we might well pray to be again. It is well occasionally to retrace our steps, and wander alone and quietly in the paths we trod when our feet danced lightly, and we believed in the goodness and truth of everything and everyone, and in the fair promise that life held out to us so delusively.

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

JOHN STREET, GOLDEN SQUARE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

"THE next day I did not go out till evening. I seemed to dread the light and the faces of men, and it was not till the usual hour of my visit to Mierzwinsky's house that I left the hotel. Then I took my way to the private door, urged partly by curiosity and partly by the desire to know the worst, even though the discovery might transform into a terrible certainty what was as yet only a dread presentiment. I rang and entered. The man of the house had never gone up the stairs with me since my first visit, and now I silently mounted, and did not halt till I stood in the lumber-room, half filled with firewood. Here I paused, because I was sure from the loud talking within that something unusual had occurred.

"At first there was a sound of confused tongues, Holzapfel's hoarse bark making itself heard above the other voices. At last there was a lull, and one voice spoke singly, and I knew in a moment it was Vera's.

"'You must believe whom you will,' she said. 'I have thought for some time that a plot was hatching against me, and at any moment I could have put my finger upon the chief plotter—the man who has never forgiven me because I would not listen to his loathsome attentions. If you condemn me, let it be on some better evidence than Holzapfel's alone.'

"'What is this, Holzapfel?' broke in the voice of Mierzwinsky. 'I never heard of this before. You never told me you wanted the girl. Is this quite straightforward?'

"'I want her, indeed!' said the German; 'likely I should want the darling of a Russian soldier! No, I am not come so low as that yet. Mierzwinsky, the truth must be faced. The girl has betrayed us; and, even now, the police may be round the house. You are her father, and it falls

hard upon you; but in times like these fatherhood and brotherhood of blood are as nothing. Our one tie, our duty to our country, must override all others. If she be guilty she must be judged. Serge Rakounine, know you anything against Vera Mierzwinsky?'

"A low, soft voice, with a strong Russian accent, began: 'This night, a week ago, I saw Vera in the Public Garden, at eleven o'clock, talking with one whom I knew to be a Russian officer. His name is Natriskine, and I saw Vera give him a paper.'

"Again Holzapfel spoke: 'Paul Lodmirski, what know you of the girl?'

"Another voice, a strange one to me, answered: 'Twice I have seen her with a Russian officer, Feodor Natriskine, a relation of an official of the third section. Both times she met him by night, once by the West Gate and once in the Public Garden.'

"'And in the Public Garden I saw her with him again last night,' said Holzapfel.

"A smothered groan was all the answer I could catch to the last speech; but in a moment Vera's voice rang out in loud defiant tone. 'If I am to die only because I love a noble gentleman, I can at least die with a clear conscience. Feodor Natriskine is no foe to Poland. He has given up more to be near me than some here have ever given up for their country. I know that I ought to have told my father at once that he was my lover, but I wanted to bring to my father my lover and a brother of the cause at the same time.'

"'The old story,' snarled Holzapfel. 'The wolf who has almost made up his mind to become a lamb.'

"'There are wolves and wolves; Russian wolves and German wolves,' said Vera; 'and rats, too, of all colours. You men here are many of you my friends, and I warn you that the fellow who brings this charge against me will not be by your side, Wenzel, nor by yours, Stanislaus, when you go to your death. He is too good a servant of the police to stand in the dock with you.'

"Again a babel of voices arose, and I heard the German shout: 'Ah, when did you ever know a traitor who did not make that charge when brought to justice. Do I not bear on my limbs the marks of the Russian's fetters? Did I not escape a second deportation by the merest chance only last year? Oh, my brothers, it is hard to be slandered in such a manner, even by one so vile as that woman there.'

"Your escape, Holzapfel, came from one of those chances which happen only to those who are on good terms with the police," said Vera in a tone of contempt.

"Then Mierzwinsky spoke. 'You admit then, Vera, that this Russian officer is your lover?'

"I do."

"Now, Rakounine and Lodmirski, do you know aught of him—of his opinions, I mean? Many of the men who wear the Czar's uniform sympathise with us; that is well known; and who shall say that young Natriskine may not be one of them? Vera says so, and I have never known her to tell a lie."

"The notions of young ladies as to truth and falsehood are apt to become a little confused in cases where their lovers are concerned," said Holzapfel.

"He is the nephew of a man who holds a high position in the secret police," said Lodmirski.

"But, even supposing he is, that is no reason why he should not be a friend of our country," said the old man. "Holzapfel, you used some shameful words about my daughter a moment ago, which neither here or elsewhere shall go unchallenged, were she ten times false to her oath. I call on you to withdraw them at once."

"A trampling of feet, and an uproar of voices, followed this speech. I heard a few disjointed remarks, such as 'the safety of the brotherhood', 'no private quarrels', and others to the same effect.

"After a little the conversation sank to a low hum, so that I could not distinguish the words. I reached forward till I was almost within sight of those who sat near the door, and at last I caught the words, 'Send for a priest,' and I had just time to step behind one of the piles of firewood, when Serge Rakounine issued from the inner room, and passed so close to me that I could have touched him easily.

"After this there was a profound silence in the inner chamber; not a word was spoken. I could hear the sound of my breath, and even the breathing of those who sat within. As I stood, half distraught with terror and perplexity, I asked myself why I had not gone in at once, instead of placing myself in the equivocal position of an eavesdropper. Why was the priest sent for? Could they be hoping to shake the girl's constancy by threats of spiritual penalties? I had, however, but little time for speculation. I heard the door below open, and almost immediately Rakounine

went by, accompanied by a man in a long black robe, whom I judged to be the priest.

"As he entered the room there was a sound of movement, but no one spoke; and a silence more awesome than any I had ever known fell upon the place. Then came the voice of the priest, speaking in a dull monotone. Surely what he was reciting was more like a service of the church than any special exhortation. I know the Roman liturgies pretty well, and by degrees I caught some of the phrases which fell from his lips.

"At last, as he slowly recited one of the most solemn and awful forms of words ever strung together by man, I knew that he was saying the mass for the dying in the presence of one whose last hour had come.

"In a moment the whole of the mystery was made clear to me. I had often heard of the bloody code by which the secret societies managed to preserve their corporate union in spite of the attacks, open and covert, of the Russian police; but never before had I been brought face to face with its frightful working. I could bear it no longer. All the blood in my body seemed rushing to my head; and, tearing the curtain aside, I stood in the midst of the meeting.

"About a dozen men were seated at a long table with a look upon their faces more stolid than awe-struck, Mierzwinsky's excepted. His was pale as death, with all the play and life gone out of it, as if it had been a face of stone. Neither joy, nor grief, nor fear, nor anger showed themselves on his soulless features. In a chair at the end of the table sat Vera; the tall black form of the priest leaning over her looked more like a soothsayer practising his arts than a minister of religion. As I burst into the room, he stopped short with his mutterings, every man started to his feet, and more than one drew a weapon from his breast, but no one spoke except Holzapfel.

"'It is only the mad Englishman!' he said; 'go on with your duty, father! Time presses.'

"'That girl shall not die,' I shouted, 'while I live! What crime is it for her to love a boy who has given up position and advancement to be near her? He has left the gaieties of London to come and live in this dreary town because the woman he loved was here. As to that man'—pointing to Holzapfel—'all she has said about him is true. I can now recall his

face. I knew him four years ago in Breslau, where he was in the pay of the Russian.'

"Holzapfel made a rapid sign to those who sat near me, and in a second I was seized by a man on either side. Then a cloth was thrown over my head; my hands were tightly strapped to my body; and before I could think of resistance, I was hurried out of the room and down the staircase. Then the cloth was taken off, and replaced after a gag had been thrust into my mouth. One of the men opened the door and gave a low whistle, and in a minute or so I heard the sound of wheels. I was dragged out, hoisted on to the carriage, my guards followed, and the drosky drove rapidly away over the stone pavement.

"A rumbling sound overhead told me that we were passing out of the town-gates, and soon I knew, from the motion of the drosky bumping over the rough road, that we were making our way out into the open country. I had lost all notion of time. It might have been after one hour, or after five, that I judged we must be passing through a ford, for I heard the splash of the horses' feet in the water, and at last, after travelling for some other interminably long space of time along a road rougher than ever, we came to a full stop.

"The two men then dismounted and dragged me off the seat. Holding me, one on either side, they hurried me along over some wet, marshy ground for some distance. Suddenly I tripped and fell, and, while I lay on the ground, a rope was knotted round my legs. I kicked and resisted as best I could; but it was all in vain. In a moment I was bound tight by practised hands, and no sooner was the operation completed than my captors vanished as suddenly as if the earth had opened to receive them, and I was left to realise the awful fact that I was lying alone in the midst of a wild forest, with no other prospect before me than death from the slow pangs of starvation. In the final struggle the cloth had fallen from my head, and in the moonlight I could faintly see the forms of my executioners as they stole rapidly away through the pine-trunks which stood like so many spectres under the silver rays.

"I think I should have fallen into a state of unconsciousness had it not been for the acute pain which came from the gag between my teeth. In my agony I dashed my mouth against the ground, and by lucky chance struck the tooth which held

the gag against a stone and broke it off, setting my jaws at liberty. My first impulse was to shout, but remembering that my foes were possibly yet within earshot, I kept silent.

"At last the moon set, and I think I must have fallen asleep, for, when I opened my eyes, it was growing light, so that I could scan the features of the place wherein I lay. It was a thinly-wooded bit of ground, sloping slightly downwards to a shallow gully where the trees had been all cut down, so as to form an open glade, and by lifting my head I could see plainly a portion of this glade, or rather forest road, as it rose up the breast of a gentle hill on the opposite side. It was a long way off, but I fancied I might be able to attract the notice of anyone passing along it by my shouts. I did not remember that, in a wild forest like this, I might lie very likely for a week and no human being come near me. The sun rose above the crest of the dense wood on my right, and held on his course all day long through a cloudless sky; and then came the long, cold night. All the time I did not hear a sound, except the soft rush of the wind through the pine-branches, or see a living thing save the birds which flew over my head, and I gave myself up for a dead man. Why should to-morrow or its successors bring succour, any more than the day which was now fading into night?

"I slept soundly through the night, and woke to see the sky redden once more for the dawn. The first rays of the morning sun struck upon the spot where the open glade mounted the hill. It lay bare and yellow in the morning light, and it seemed, for some reason or other, to be much plainer to the view than it was yesterday. I could see the crows and jackdaws hopping about, and even hear their chatter. Suddenly its crest grew dark with a moving mass which dissolved into black atoms as it descended the hill, and as the foremost of these approached me, I could see that they were swine, driven, no doubt, from some farm to pasture in the forest. At last, when they had all disappeared from sight behind a knoll which lay in front of me, the swine-herd himself came into view.

"I did not know whether the glade along which he was driving his herd approached or diverged from where I lay, but I felt that I must lose no time in making myself heard. I shouted and shrieked, and in the intervals of silence I could hear the low grunting of the pigs. It seemed to come

nearer and nearer; but at last my ear, with fatal accuracy, told me that it was becoming more indistinct. I screamed till I almost fainted, but all in vain. The dreadful silence had fallen around me again, and I felt that I should never hear it broken more.

"I had resigned myself to my fate, when all at once a sound as of breaking twigs and dull snuffling came through the trees. I lifted my head, and saw, about forty yards in front of me, an enormous boar wandering about and rooting amongst the bracken and bushes. Soon I heard a sound as if another were following in his track, but there was no grunting this time, only the noise of the breaking branches and rustling grass, and in a second or two the figure of a man appeared. I shrieked out so loud as soon as I saw him, that he stopped as if he had been shot, instead of going to secure his errant pig, which again scampered away when he saw his custodian approach. Then the swineherd came towards me, and, having satisfied himself that I was harmless, he ransacked all the pockets in my outer coat, but when he set about the pillage of the remote recesses of my attire, he found his intention balked by the cords which bound my arms. He drew out a knife, and, having cut the bonds, took my watch, and purse, and all my other belongings, as if he had been brought up to the business. I lay quite still, amply content to have regained a portion of my liberty. Having cleaned me out completely, he dragged me into a standing position, and, slipping off my overcoat, threw it over his shoulder, and marched off to recover the hog that had, so opportunely for me, wandered from the herd. I lay still for about ten minutes, and then, with many painful efforts, I untied my feet. I was stiff and benumbed from my bonds, and weak from want of food, but the burning desire within me to get back to the city buoyed me up. I staggered along at a good pace through the wood. I soon struck the by-road, and after about three hours' walking, I saw the towers of Warsaw in front of me. I walked as straight as I could go to the police bureau, and told to the commissary the whole of my strange story. He sent two officers out with me, and I led them to the back street. We rang, and could hear the clang of the bell inside, but no answer came. I fancied I heard the noise of a closing shutter overhead, and rang the bell louder and longer than before. At last an

old woman put her head out of a window adjoining, and told us that the house before which we stood had been empty for the past six months.

"The officials looked at each other a little suspiciously. They had with them their crowbars, and I besought them to break in the door. This was soon done, and I led the way up the stairs through the hidden door to the lumber-room, and onwards to the inner chamber. My heart stood still as I neared the threshold, for I dreaded the discovery which might await us on the other side; but when I drew back the curtain and passed in, I saw nothing before me but what I had seen, a dozen times before. Chairs and tables, somewhat dusty indeed, all stood in their wonted places. Vera's water-colours still hung on the walls, and a piece of embroidery, which I remembered to have seen her working at the first time I called, lay on the back of one of the chairs. But there was no sign of any human presence, or of the awful tribunal which had so lately sat there. The police ferretted about in every corner, but found not so much as a scrap of paper to elucidate the mystery.

"And this strange episode must for ever remain one of the undiscovered mysteries in the annals of political crime, for all the people who sat in the inner chamber on that fateful night have vanished as completely as if the earth had engulfed them. Whether the German was a traitor or not; whether the smart young man, who used to ring the bell over the way, really joined the brotherhood, and took the first step on the road to Siberia; whether Mierzwinsky had to see his daughter die before his eyes, are mysteries which neither I nor any other human being will ever be able to reveal."

A CREATION.

Of her heart, and her soul, and her life,
A form like a child she made;
She wished that its beauty had been more fair,
More light in its eyes, more gold in its hair;
Yet she gave it her all of rich and rare
And by its side she prayed.

Prayed that the very spell of her love,
Would give it subtle charms!
She sleeked its tresses, till soft they showed:
She kissed its lips, till to rose they glowed,
And so, all freshly and daintily robed,
She laid it in his arms.

Will he stoop above it tenderly,
And take from it one sweet kiss?
Will he hold it a moment closely pressed?
Or cast it away all uncared for?
Or leave it coldly to die on his breast
What matter? It is his.

BURMAH AND THE BURMESE

THIS country, ruled by arrogant Princes, has given us much trouble from time to time. It tried conclusions with us in 1824-6, but was signally worsted, losing the Provinces of Arrakan and Tenasserim. Again, in 1852, we were forced into war, and Lord Dalhousie annexed Bassein, Martaban, and Pegu, and would have taken possession of the whole country, but for our "Peace at any price" party in England. He, however, gave the Court of Ava to understand that if it offended again, the race of Alomphra would be swept off the face of the earth.

King Theebaw has tried the patience of successive Viceroys since he became the ruler of Upper Burmah; but at last it has been decided by the present Governor-General of India to put an end to his vagaries by an invasion of his country.

Burmah is an extensive country, stretching from about twenty-six to ten degrees of latitude, and lying between ninety-two and one hundred degrees of east longitude. It is thus nearly one thousand miles by five hundred, or contains an area of five hundred thousand square miles. The lower portion, from twenty degrees southward, is subject to a regular monsoon, is undoubtedly the most fertile and valuable, and is one of the most flourishing of our possessions.

Speaking of Lower Burmah, the late Dr. Mason, quoting the words of a visitor to the province, says: "It is a beautiful country; in it are views and patches of scenery, green fields, and green lanes, that lead back the mind to one's own land. It is a beautiful country when seen on the coast, but it is still more beautiful when seen amid its mountain streams—streams which cannot be surpassed in romantic beauty even in the annals of poetry." It is magnificently watered: some of the finest rivers in the world running either through its centre or skirting its boundaries, whilst many smaller streams aid in the development of its trade, and add additional beauty to its scenery. In parts it is very mountainous, in others very flat and very fertile. It has extensive forests of teak and other valuable trees. Every stream yields gold-dust, nuggets have been found here and there, and there are indications of an auriferous formation everywhere.

Silver is rather scarce in our provinces; but it is abundant to the north-east of

Mandalay, where, with other precious metals and stones, it is carefully guarded and hidden from the eyes of the European intruder. Copper, antimony, iron, and sulphur are found in the islands of the Mergui Archipelago, and also on the banks of the Attaran. Malachite exists in Arrakan, and also in the Attaran. Lead is scarce with us, but plentiful in Upper Burmah. Iron is very common almost everywhere. Tin is abundant in the Tenasserim Province. Manganese and arsenic are obtainable near Mergui. Coal of an inferior description is found near Mergui; but some eighty miles inland is very plentiful and of the finest quality. Limestone is plentiful near Moulmein, and again in Upper Burmah, but is scarce in our provinces. Forty miles beyond our frontier are the celebrated earth oil-wells, which yield a good revenue to the Court of Ava. The whole country is exceedingly rich in its flora. Its rivers and its coasts abound with the most delicious fish, and its mountain streams afford capital sport to the angler. Diamond Island and the Cocos are famous for their turtle. Its vast forests and extensive plains covered with perpetual vegetation swarm with mammals and birds, sought alike by the sportsman and the naturalist.

The tea-plant has been found growing wild in Karennee, and in the neighbourhood of Bhamo, and it is indigenous between the Irawaddy and the Brahmapootra on the borders of Assam. Even in Arrakan it has been a success. In many localities the climate of Burmah is more suitable for tea cultivation than even Assam. In it the extremes of heat and cold are not so marked, and there is a total exemption from the hot winds, which do so much damage to the tea-plant in Assam; yet that tropical humidity so necessary to the development of leaf, is characteristic of parts of Lower Burmah, Arrakan, Karennee, and again in the regions which lie to the north and west of Bhamo. Both the Burmese and Karens are easily led, have no caste, and will readily settle down on an estate where they could get regular work and pay, and were kindly treated. The work in a tea-garden would just suit these Orientals, as it is not too severe, and they are already noted for farming their own "towngas" or hillside clearances.

The Burmese are of Tartar origin, and have the high cheek bones, the broad faces, the flat noses, and the slanting eyes peculiar to people of that family.

Individually the Burman is a plucky fellow; collectively he is of very little use as a soldier, as he is impatient of restraint and discipline. Professing Buddhism, a religion which forbids the shedding of blood, no one in the world is more blood-thirsty and cruel than he, when he has a wrong, either real or fancied, to avenge. He is a daring robber, fond of raids by night or day, but he is not a pilferer; as an indoor servant he will help himself to tea, sugar, or tobacco, but in doing so he does not seem to imagine that he is committing larceny; until his evil passions are aroused, he is kind-hearted and merry as a child. A Burman is usually short, but stoutly built and very muscular; but he is by nature excessively lazy, and, though he excels as a boatman, he is so indolent that the boat traffic in the principal ports is in the hands of the Madrassees and Chinese. The Burmese are given to frequent ablutions, and delight in gorgeous apparel. Having no caste, they will eat and drink with or after a European. They show signs of respect by sitting down unbidden, instead of by standing up, like most Orientals. A Burman will never walk if he can ride or go by boat; when necessary, he will work like a slave from morn till eve, propelling a heavy boat up or down stream. They have huge holes in the lobes of their ears, and use them as receptacles for cheroots, etc.

Both sexes are very proud of their hair, which is of a jet-black, very long and luxuriant. It is tied up in a knot at the back of the head; the men entwine a gaudy handkerchief round it, the women a garland of flowers. Unless very poor, they condescend to wear nothing but silk, the men a "pussoo", which is tied round the waist and extends to the knees, one end being drawn up tight from the front and fastened at the back; the women wear either a "thamine", which exposes the inside of one leg half-way up the thigh, or a "loongee", or petticoat, which is more decent; the upper part of the body is covered with a flowing jacket, with very tight sleeves. A scarf is generally thrown over the shoulders and allowed to hang down in front.

The Burmese excel as carvers of wood, and show considerable architectural skill in the construction of their monasteries, or "phoonghie" houses. They are very charitable, but inveterate gamblers, and will often risk all they are worth, and more, on a cock-fight, or a pony or boat race. Even the

girls will sometimes, after losing all their ornaments and jewellery, stake themselves against such a sum as they consider they are worth.

From an early age every boy is taught to read and write his own language, but the same boon is not extended to the women, because the class who educate the boys are forbidden to look at, or to speak to, one of the opposite sex. With the exception of the very poor, who bury their dead, the Burman burns his, and has a grand ceremony over the event.

Their priests are doomed to celibacy. They cannot possess any property, and are solely dependent on the charity of the people for their daily food. Every morning, neophytes, dressed in the yellow garb, go round from house to house, and receive in bowls, suspended round their necks, the offerings of their parishioners; they live in monasteries, which are generally large and airy, raised six or eight feet off the ground, and very well built. They are divided into three or more compartments, one serving as a chapel, another as a schoolroom, and the others as dormitories. The priests are the village schoolmasters, and begin lessons every morning long before daybreak. In the vicinity of these monasteries are "zyats", or resting-places for travellers, and many a European has been startled, not to say alarmed, by hearing unearthly yells from the adjacent buildings an hour before daylight—as every boy screams out his lessons at the top pitch of his voice, a hubbub is created which is all but sufficient to wake the dead. These priests are good mathematicians, and able to calculate eclipses of the sun and moon. Their books consist of strips of the leaves of the sacred palm, written in Pali. As a rule, these "phoonghies" are good, honest men, acting up to the tenets of their religion, which, after Christianity, is, perhaps, the best in the world. They can leave the sacerdotal calling whenever they like, and become laymen; but they seldom do so, and those who do are looked down upon.

When a priest of any note dies, he is embalmed and kept for a year, and then burnt with much rejoicing and festivity. All the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, and even of those far distant, turn out. Many dummy coffins are made, besides the one containing the defunct. The procession starts from the place where the body has been lying in state towards the place of cremation, which is always at

a place some distance off, accompanied by a vast concourse of men, women, and children, all dressed in their Sunday best, preceded by a noisy band of wind instruments. On approaching the funeral pyre, which has already been prepared, the crowd forms into two parties, ropes are attached to the bier—a wheeled vehicle containing the coffin—front and rear, and a struggle takes place, which much resembles the game known as French and English.

Sometimes the coffin is upset, and its ghastly burden thrown out, but generally the struggle is a mere sham, the party behind give way, and the bier is run in amidst deafening yells. The coffin is placed over the pyre, which is a mass of dry faggots, in the centre of which is concealed some gunpowder; to this numerous ropes are attached, and stretched to a spot beyond the rough palings which surround the place of cremation; to these ropes again are attached rockets, which are lighted and propelled towards the pyre, and he or she, who first succeeds in setting it alight, is looked upon as one destined to a happy life. These funeral-pyres are very tastefully built and erected; they consist of inflammable materials, but are as gorgeous as tinsel and bright colours can make them. They are very prettily grouped, and often cost many thousands of rupees. The hubbub and noise are deafening, and the dust fearful. Stalls are erected, and a brisk trade carried on. Everybody is happy and merry, and decked out with all the ornaments they possess, and in their finest apparel. After some hours' jollification, in which women and children freely mix and join, the whole of the structures so carefully and tastefully erected are burnt down, and the crowd goes its way rejoicing. The fellow "phoongies" of the defunct collect the ashes of their dead brother, and deposit them in an urn, which again, if the deceased has been a high-priest, is enclosed either in a pagoda or in the bosom of one of the immense images of Guadama which surround most sacred shrines.

Marriage with the Burmese is a matter of free choice, and is attended generally by a good deal of courtship on the man's part and coquetry on that of the girl; but their marriage-tie is exceedingly frail, as nothing is easier than for either party to get a divorce. For Orientals their morals are very good.

Burmese houses are well raised off the ground on piles, or "machâus"; their villages are regularly built, and often consist

of only one long street, which is broad, and lined on either side by domiciles well suited to the country. The people are very hospitable. In nearly every village, and in the vicinity of pagodas and monasteries, they erect spacious "zyats", or resting-places for travellers, and in a shed, well protected from the sun, they place porous chatties or pots of water for the thirsty. Along their principal roads, too, they place similar accommodation for the weary at distances of a few miles apart. A case of real destitution is scarcely known, and so bounteous is the soil that it is computed that if a man labour three months he can live in idleness the remaining nine. Before our time, roads, in our acceptation of the term, were unknown. The first cart after the rains made or marked out the road for the season; but through a village of importance, or leading to a group of "phoonghie" houses, they sometimes made a raised pathway, either of brick on edge or of planks raised a foot or two off the surface of the ground. The better and richer classes use teak throughout for the construction of their houses; the poorer are content with bamboos and thatch.

The famous Burmese ponies are not Burmese at all, but Shan, and are brought down from the confines of China, some four or five hundred miles beyond our frontier. They are very sure-footed, and many of them are perfectly beautiful in symmetry. They are speedy for their size, and wonderful jumpers; they are very docile, for they are—like the pure Arabs—handled from their birth, and only require shoeing when brought upon our macadamised roads. They have a good deal of Arab blood in them, too, for a Shan has as keen an eye for a horse as a Yorkshireman, and many of them purchased officers' Arab chargers in days gone by, and took them to their own country.

The ordinary Burman pony is very like the "tat" of India, but they get through a lot of work, and a Burman will prefer one of his own breed to that of the Shans—probably because they cost a tenth of what is asked for the latter; but they are hardier, and will live where a Shan pony would starve.

The saddles, bridles, and stirrups in use amongst the Burmese are very peculiar. A Burman rides principally by balance; the knees are well away from the saddle, and when necessary they hold on by their heels. Only the great toe is inserted in

the stirrup. Ungainly and unsafe as appears their seat, they get over the ground wonderfully well, and seldom fall off. The ponies are all taught to amble, and a good pacer will fetch a long price.

The Burmese women, without being pretty, are very taking after the first impression their peculiar features make on one has worn off. They are beautifully proportioned, though on a smallish scale, with busts, arms, feet, and general contour which might serve as models to the most fastidious painter or sculptor. They are fond of ornaments; all possess some jewellery, and many are covered with it. They all smoke and chew betel-nut, but have nice small, white, even teeth. They can all swim, and delight in dabbling about in water. For Orientals, both men and women are a fair race, and, where the body is not exposed to the rays of the sun, the skin is as fair as in many European brunettes. There is no restriction on the liberty of a Burmese girl or woman; she is free to mix amongst her own people or to visit European families. The men are not unduly jealous. The wife reigns supreme in the house, and conducts the sale or purchase of all necessaries, unchallenged by the husband. A girl's great ambition is to keep a stall in a bazaar; it is her introduction into society, and is equivalent to our own girls being brought out. They are a merry, pleasant race, and so struck were the stalwart Seiks, that when, after the last war, they returned to their own country, many took back with them these, comparatively speaking—as to face only—plain women, preferring them as wives and companions to their own far comelier women.

Round various pagodas, living in dilapidated "zyats", may be seen old, decrepit women, with shaven heads, and dressed in white. These are the only outcasts in Burmah. When a woman becomes old, indigent, and has no relations, and is, probably, all but unknown, she becomes a slave of the pagoda, and lives as described. They help to sweep up the platform round the shrine, and, as they live on the offerings of food left for "nats" and other spirits, which is looked upon as disgraceful by the people, they become outcasts. Occasionally a young girl may be seen amongst them, but, were she as beautiful as a houri, no Burman would take her to wife; and this is the only instance in which these people show any signs of caste.

It is almost impossible to understand the

character of the Burmese. A man will not injure a worm; his religion forbids the shedding of blood; he will starve rather than kill a cow or a bullock, though there may be thousands, and there be no fodder for them. Those who follow the chase are looked upon as accursed, yet there are always one or two in every remote village who kill game, which the people readily buy; but they care no more for taking the life of a human being, often with the greatest tortures, than we should think of killing a flea.

A Burman has considerable knowledge of botany; there is scarcely a plant for which he has not a name, and the medicinal qualities, if any, of most herbs, are well known to them. They all know sufficient of the solar system to be able to guide themselves at night by the stars.

Every Burmese girl is a born actress. They delight in theatrical exhibitions, and will sit up night after night absorbed in contemplating the piece before them. These plays are very well worth seeing, and generally very well acted. The Burmese have sweet voices and a considerable knowledge of music, far in advance of other Orientals. In India, a nautch-girl, or one who dances in public, is, by profession, one of the outcasts of society; not so in Burmah, where no stigma is attached to either actor or actress.

I have heard divines object to the Buddhist religion, principally because they believe that its fundamental principle is final annihilation. I do not think this is so. The priests say that man sprang from God who gave him life; that, in accordance as he has made use of that life, so will be his future treatment. If his life has been perfect, then he at once returns to the Godhead or is absorbed therein; but if, as is most probable, he has failed, then other chances are given him. He undergoes various forms of transmigration, until he has purged him of his sins and become perfect; he then receives "Niban". This religion is much older than any existing one, for Hindooism cannot be called a religion. Buddhist missionaries were preaching the gospel of Buddha, or Guadama, and people, already converts thereto, were constructing the great pagoda at Rangoon, when Rome was but thought of. It is impossible to convert a true Buddhist. Missionaries amongst the Karens and Cossyabs have been very successful, for these people have no religion, but they have proved a failure amongst the Burmese and Hindoos.

The people in Upper Burmah, as far as

the Burmese are concerned, are identical with those in our provinces. We have Karens, Kachyens, and a few others; so have they; but all these people differ in accordance with their habitat. Between the Shans and Chinese on the north-eastern frontier, there is very little difference. The Shans bordering Karennee, resemble somewhat Karens. Between the Kachyens, supposed to be the aboriginal inhabitants, there is less difference, but their dialects are not identical. They have never professed the Buddhist religion, and are at enmity with the Burmese always. Their women were said to have been the fairest in the country, and courted by the rulers; raids were frequently made, and the young girls carried off to become in time the wives of grandees—a fate far preferable to their living and dying in the remote regions occupied by their people. But their own countrymen did not see it in that light, and to prevent the possibility of anything of the kind occurring again, they tattoo the faces of all their women in their childhood. What they may have been in a foregone generation I cannot tell, but a more hideous race does not now exist upon earth.

When Lord Dalhousie declared war at an end, in June, 1853, he drew a straight line a few miles above Meaday, to the Pongloun mountains; all below he declared to be British—above he left to the Court of Ava. At the same time he warned the King that if he or his successors offended again, the race of Alomphra would be wiped off the face of the earth. That he intended to have annexed the whole country, there is no doubt. He took the kernel, he said, and left the husk; but it is a pity he was not allowed to carry out his own views. We had the Burmese then at our feet, and it would have been as easy to have annexed the whole as a part only; now it may be a more difficult and costly task. Of late years the late and present Kings have spent much money on the river defences, and have employed not only Europeans of other nationalities, but also renegade countrymen of our own, in making torpedoes, guns, rifles, and ammunition. So, though there is no army worthy of the name, the present King ought to be able to make a better fight of it than his father could have made at the conclusion of hostilities in 1853.

The first Burmese station arrived at after we pass our own frontier is Menloon, where there is a custom-house. Portions of the

Irawaddy, between Meaday and Menloon, are beautiful. The river is confined between hills; it is deep and studded with well-wooded islands, which could all give trouble if stockaded and armed, as they would command the river-channels through which our boats would have to steam. Beyond Menloon the river widens. Menhla has a fine pagoda, and is a largish town. If defended, it would detain us a day or two to reduce, or it could be masked. The next place of importance is Yay-nan-choung, or Stinking Water Stream, where the petroleum wells are. They are about three miles inland; in their neighbourhood there is not a blade of grass; no vegetation grows within several hundred feet of the locality where the oil is found.

The wells are very deep, some as much as three hundred feet; the effluvium is most sickening, and when a well requires excavating, there are but two or three men capable of undertaking the task, and they cannot remain down for more than a minute or two. Occasionally men have lost their lives in going down. This property, in former years, belonged to some dozen families, who intermarried and kept their interests intact, and this was acted up to for several generations; but the elders now complain that the young men and women are getting independent; that the girls either marry outsiders or that the young men bring home strange wives; and that the property is consequently depreciating in value. The oil extracted is a monopoly of the King's, and gives a fair return. In Rangoon, candles, soap, kerosene oil, and the so-called Rangoon oil, and vaseline, are all manufactured from petroleum brought down from these wells. The oil floats all over the waters of the river round Yau-nau-choung and emits a fetid smell.

Beyond this point the river widens out. The left bank is protected by high cliffs, apparently of a chalky formation, rising from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet above the river. These cliffs are the homes of thousands and thousands of blue-rock pigeons, who burrow into the chalky strata, form their nests, and, as the surrounding country is well cultivated with wheat, and "chenna" (Bengal grain), and other grain, on which they feed unmolested, they are capital eating.

Whilst in our own provinces the monsoon is as regular in its visitations as clockwork, it ceases altogether a little above Menloon. The nature of the

country thus changes; swamps are conspicuous by their absence; there are water-courses, but none presenting much obstacle to troops advancing. Cavalry could manœuvre anywhere. The villages are few and far between; there is very little paddy grown, and that only by artificial irrigation. Heavy embankments have been thrown up and vast tanks dug, but the rainfall is not sufficient to fill them; there is, therefore, no great out-turn of "paddy". People in Upper Burmah are dependent on Lower Burmah for rice, which forms such an item in the food of all Orientals. I have no doubt that we could starve Ava into submission; but it would be a slow process and cause fearful suffering if we put an embargo on the export of rice from our province to the regions above.

Pagan Myo was the capital of Burmah some centuries ago. It was taken by the Chinese, and fell into our hands during Sir Archibald Campbell's advance in the war of 1824-6. It is now a vast concourse of ruins of some of the most beautiful pagodas in Burmah. It extends along the river-bank for some nine or ten miles, and is, perhaps, three or four miles broad.

Most of the pagodas have been looted and partially destroyed by the hill-people for the gold and silver images and precious stones buried in them when built—these robbers, of course, are not Buddhists. So numerous are these pagodas that if a Burman wishes to express an impossibility, he says, such and such is as possible as for a man to count the pagodas at Pagan. To the east of Pagan there is good riding-ground, where wild boars are numerous; beyond, again, there are hills rising to between two and three thousand feet which contain deer and panther; I did not hear of the existence of any tigers. Small game, such as partridges, jungle-fowl, hares, plover, quail, are fairly abundant. The Anambo Pagoda is a marvel of beautiful architecture. It is in the shape of a Grecian cross, and, according to Colonel Yule, Italians designed and erected these well-proportioned and graceful structures.

Sagain, on the right bank, is built on a ridge of rocks; the river narrows there; on the left bank there is a perpendicular granite hill, rising some three hundred feet above the water's edge. The river between the two is only a few hundred feet across. Guns could close the passage if mounted on the heights of Sagain, and on the granite hill. From the latter an almost vertical fire

could be directed on craft attempting to pass below; the former could be bombarded, but the latter would have to be assaulted from the rear, the river face being impregnable.

Beyond, on the left bank, is old Ava; it is overgrown with jungle, and the greater part of the ramparts are breached. The old pagodas are still intact, and one small portion of the ancient town is still inhabited, but it is a sad ruin. The next capital, Umrappoorah, is also in ruins. It was deserted in 1857-58 by order of the late King. Mandalay was built in 1858-9 and succeeding years; it is two miles inland, but several creeks lead up to it, but they are narrow and tortuous, and would be difficult to ascend even during the height of the river. Burmese Kings are very fond of building new capitals. Umrappoorah was deserted, no doubt, through being too near the river-bank, for the King had a wholesome dread of our steamers. In building Mandalay, the ruler vainly hoped to be out of reach of our fire, but with our present improved long-range artillery, it would not take a couple of hours to batter the city and palace about his ears. The city is well laid out in imitation of Rangoon, but the streets are wider, and all built in straight lines, and at right angles one with the other. The King's palace forms a square within a fortified position, within which again is a stockade, but it would offer very little resistance to our troops.

Opposite Mandalay is Mandoon, where there is the largest mass of brickwork in the world, and the second largest hill. The former was intended for an immense pagoda—a small model built alongside shows that it was to have been six hundred feet high when completed. But when two hundred feet had been built, the great earthquake of 1839 shattered it, and the Burmese, looking on that as a bad omen, abandoned the undertaking; in it there is a solid rectangular tower said to contain images in solid gold and silver of the former Kings of Ava, and each equal in weight to the person it represents. This tower has not suffered, and is said to contain over a million worth of gold alone, to say nothing of silver and precious stones; the great bell is sixteen feet in diameter. The country is hilly, and covered with low jungle, which is full of jungle-fowl, partridges, and hares. It has never been shot over, as it is within a radius of twenty miles of the King's palace, within which

the lives of all creatures are sacred—man alone excepted, whose life, at the King's bidding, is not worth twopence. Near Mandalay is the Chinese quarter, and their beautifully built and adorned joss-house. The whole of the materials and lifelike figures were brought from China, and put together first at Umrappoorah, and afterwards moved, by order, to Mandalay. Close by, also, is a space allotted to the Munipoories, who form the King's cavalry. Their ponies appear to me to be a mixture of the Burmese and Shan, and are sturdy brutes. Each saddle has huge flaps of leather, which cover both flanks of the pony. I believe these men would desert to us in a body if we were to advance on the capital. As cavalry the Munipoories would be contemptible.

Near a large pagoda, and in a building of its own, is the great idol which was brought over from Arrakan, and which took, it is said, ten thousand men to carry. Hundreds of devotees visit it every day, and even the poorest attaches one gold leaf, whilst the richer put on many. Thus it is somewhat disfigured, and has many thousands of pounds of pure gold over it; a good deal must have been removed from time to time or it would have resembled several Daniel Lamberts in one by this time.

The Palace of the White Elephant must not be forgotten. It is, like all Burmese structures, solid and gorgeous. What the present animal may be like I do not know, but the old one was about the handsomest elephant I ever saw. He ranks after the King, and when dressed for state occasions, his trappings are worth many lacs of rupees. The King's regalia, too, is probably the finest in the world. He possesses, it is said, the largest ruby and the largest sapphire in the world, besides innumerable other precious stones, all obtained in the country. The ruby mines have not as yet been visited by any European, but it is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when this and other districts, said to be teeming with precious stones and gold, will be examined by our experts.

The King and his ministers possess magnificent studs of elephants; they are so numerous in their wild state that there is no organised system of catching them. Female decoys are let loose, and these come back, accompanied by males, who are easily caught, as they follow their Delilahs into stockades prepared for that purpose. There were two which actually touched the very walls of Umrappoorah itself.

All round the city there are quarries of alabaster, lithographic-stone, and marble, and carving images of Guadama out of the first is a recognised industry of the place. Teak forests are interminable. Lead is very plentiful. I saw boat-loads of it, waiting for permission to leave for Rangoon. The city itself is commanded by a ridge of hills, a couple of guns on which would batter the place to pieces.

As an enemy in the field the Burmese are not worth a thought; nor would they attempt to meet us in the open; but behind a stockade they are a stubborn foe. These structures are built of immense teak logs, placed, touching each other, on end, and of a good height, formidable to attack in front or the flanks, but generally open in the rear. A Burman likes to have a loop-hole for escape. If our troops were to advance at once, and mask any fortified posts they came across it would be enough. The garrisons would not venture out to attack, and directly the capital fell, and the King was dethroned, they would capitulate. We have little to fear from their armies, but we have cause to dread their dacoits, who can inflict much loss on us by carrying on a predatory warfare in our rear. Every Burman, whether he hates or loves us, would join in dacoity. They cannot resist it. It is to them an irresistible lark, in which youth, middle-age, and old, all partake.

All Burmese towns are built of most inflammable materials, and the people are born incendiaries. They are also expert assassins. I have known them commit most daring murders with impunity. There was the case of poor Latter, in 1853. Although he had a sentry walking up and down before his bedroom door, three men got into his bedroom and stabbed him to death and escaped. Again, in January, 1854, they crept through our cordon of sentries, entered the tent of the serjeant-major of the Horse Artillery, stabbed him in the throat, and again escaped! Again, within our own lines, I have known a native official's house openly attacked in the night, the owner riddled through with red-hot irons, and not a man caught! I could mention very many more cases, but the above will suffice to show how careful our soldiers must be of their lines; not from open enemies, but from the midnight assassin.

Unless the campaign be a very speedy and a brief one, our commissariat should be provided with a large store of rice, to avoid the horrors which occurred after the war of

1852-3, when thousands and thousands of people died of starvation. There is little or no rice in Upper Burmah; what little cultivation there is will be put a stop to by the breaking out of hostilities, and we should be ready to import large quantities close on the heels of our army. Until the country is pacified and a government fixed, we shall be forced to keep a large army in the field, or in places whence a force could march here and there at once. We shall require garrisons at Menloon, Pagan Myo, Mandalay, and Bhamo. At Pagan should be the headquarters force and principal station. Barracks and other public buildings could be easily constructed from the debris of the thousands of pagodas lying scattered about in ruins all over the immense plain. It would not be looked upon as desecration by the Burmese; provided that pagodas, like the Ananbo and others, which are intact, were preserved and guarded, as was the great pagoda of Rangoon in 1852.

As a counterpoise to the dacoity, we should raise troops of Burmese from our province. These men, though useless as regulars, make excellent "irregulars of irregulars", and would be more than a match for the dacoits, as they would be better armed and led than their foes, and equally fond of the game.

When it comes to a question of arranging a frontier, a straight line about one hundred and sixty miles above Luddega, on the Brahmapootra, should be drawn downwards until it meets the Salween, the left bank of that river being followed until it reaches our present territory. But the countries lying to the east, as far as the Lausan or Kulung river, embracing the Shan States and Karennee, as well as Siam, should be declared as independent, but under our protection, with the distinct understanding that no encroachments by any power would be allowed, or if attempted, would be accepted as a *casus belli*. To the east of these regions there is ample space to satisfy even French susceptibilities. Neither Siam, nor the Shan and cognate States, are warlike or likely to make raids into French territory. The people are industrious and peaceable, and would form an admirable buffer between us and our restless would-be neighbours.

It is a pity the Government of India did not decide on an invasion earlier in the year. This is the worst season they could have chosen, the river being at all but its

lowest. During July, August, and September, our gunboats could have steamed up easily, and could have defied all attempts of the Burmese to stop them, for there is ample water during those months; but now only shallow vessels can go up, and that only by certain narrow channels which are well known to the Burmese, and which could be blocked either by obstructions or torpedoes, or commanded by stockades. But there can be no doubt that though the difficulties and consequently the expenses will be far greater now than during the favourable months, our troops ought to be able to capture Mandalay and dethrone the King before the hot weather sets in.

COUNT PAOLO'S RING.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XIV.

As the train slackened speed, and entered the station, Angela, looking eagerly from the window, saw on the platform a tall, ladylike-looking woman, plainly but well dressed in black. Madame Ruskoi had promised to send her English nurse to meet Angela, and the girl had little difficulty in concluding that this unmistakably English-looking person was the Mrs. Elliot mentioned in Madame Ruskoi's letter to the Princess. She advanced towards her, smiled, and bowed.

"Am I speaking to Mrs. Elliot?" she said.

"Yes; and you are Miss Belton, I suppose?"

Mrs. Elliot held out her hand to Angela with a cordial smile. Her manner and voice were pleasant and refined, and her general appearance superior to the position which she occupied in madame's household. Angela had not expected to see such a dignified personage, and was surprised and pleased with her manner and greeting.

She pointed out her luggage, and followed Mrs. Elliot across the station to where a carriage was waiting, and took a seat by her side.

"We have rather a long drive. I hope you are not very tired, Miss Belton?" Mrs. Elliot said kindly.

Angela smiled, and shook her head. She sat and looked out of the window, as the carriage drove along the wide, paved streets, with eager, interested eyes. She had heard St. Petersburg described as a "city of palaces", and the description was not

overdrawn, she thought, as she looked at the magnificent shops, and hotels, and public buildings.

The moon was rising, and it shone with dazzling brightness on the white marble façades of some of the houses. The air was clear and invigorating, but very cold. Angela shivered even through her thick ulster and wraps. She felt very tired with her journey, and the jolting of the carriage over the stones made her head ache violently, and she was glad when Mrs. Elliot at last looked out of the window and announced that they had nearly reached their destination.

"Here we are at home; you must long to rest," she said.

The carriage stopped before a large, brilliantly-lighted house. Mrs. Elliot alighted, and desired Angela to follow her into the house. As she did so, and entered a great outer hall, another carriage drove up to the door, and Mrs. Elliot, hastily putting her hand on Angela's arm, drew her back into the shadow of the portico.

"Wait a moment, Miss Belton; madame receives to-night," she whispered.

Two ladies, wrapped in soft, rich furs, accompanied by a tall, handsome man with more than one order blazing on his breast, entered, and passed up the staircase into an inner hall. Angela looked after them curiously; her fatigue had left her, she felt very excited, but not in the least timid or afraid. The great hall; the number of servants in their splendid liveries; the evidences of wealth and luxury and almost barbaric splendour which met her eye on every side as she followed Mrs. Elliot up the great marble staircase, excited her curiosity, but failed to awaken any awe in her mind. Through an open door she caught a glimpse of a magnificent suite of rooms filled with gaily-dressed figures. Near the doorway of the first room a tall, fair-haired woman, with a tiara of diamonds blazing in her hair, and a diamond necklace gleaming amongst the costly lace that veiled her beautiful neck, stood to receive her guests. The two ladies whom Angela had just seen in the hall had passed into an inner room; the gentleman still lingered by his hostess's side. There was a murmur of voices and laughter, and of low music—the scent of flowers everywhere. Angela would willingly have lingered for a second glance, but Mrs. Elliot hurried her up the staircase and along a corridor, whose walls were lined with costly paintings, and opening a

door at the farther end, took her into another corridor.

"This is our wing of the house, Miss Belton; that"—and she pointed to the farthest door—"leads to the day and night nurseries; this is your schoolroom, and beyond it your bed and bath rooms."

She opened a door as she spoke, and followed Angela into a pretty, comfortable room, to which a bright fire burning in an open grate, and a great stand of flowers in the window, gave a pleasant, homelike air. There was a couch drawn up to the hearth; near it a table stood, spread ready for supper. A great wolf-dog lying stretched before the fire rose as she entered, and walked round and sniffed at her, and finally, after contemplating her with a friendly, meditative air, wagged his tail and lay down again before the fire.

"That is *Mdlle. Nadine's* dog; see, he makes friends at once with you," Mrs. Elliot said. "Is it not pleasant to see a fire, Miss Belton? This is the only open grate in the house; all the other rooms are heated by stoves. But you must be very tired and hungry. I will leave you for a few minutes while I go into the nursery to see my children. This is your bedroom." She led the way into a small room and looked round. "I think there is all that you require—if not, please ring. The nursery-maid will wait upon you; she is an English girl."

"Thank you; I don't think I shall require anything else," Angela said quietly.

She looked round the room, and smiled to herself. Madame had liberal notions respecting the accommodation of the governess, she thought. The room was more luxurious than the one she occupied at the Abbey. The floor was polished; in the centre lay a square of rich carpet; there was a small writing-table, a wardrobe with plate-glass doors, pictures and books in abundance. Angela made a hasty toilette, then returned to the school-room, where a rosy-cheeked English girl was waiting.

Mrs. Elliot came in by-and-by, and talked while Angela ate her supper. She was a sensible, pleasant person, and was evidently disposed to be very gracious to the new governess. She appeared, too, from the deference with which she was treated both by the nursery-maid and also by Madame Ruskoï's French maid, who knocked at the door by-and-by with a message from madame to enquire if Miss Belton had arrived, to be a person of much importance in the

household, and one whom it was advisable to conciliate. Angela quite won her heart before the night was over by the ready interest with which she listened to her family history, and her reasons for consenting to expatriate herself and take service in Madame Ruskoi's family.

"I have only one child, Miss Belton, and I am anxious to give her a good education," she explained. "When my husband died—he was a curate—I was left almost destitute, and was obliged to bestir myself and to earn my own living. Madame is very liberal and pays me a very high salary—three times as much as I could get in England as housekeeper or companion. So, much to the annoyance of all my friends," and she smiled quietly, "I swallowed my pride and entered Madame Ruskoi's service. And I have never repented the step. I am well paid, and I am almost my own mistress. Madame never interferes with me; the children like me; if only the climate was a little more genial, I should be quite content and happy."

"I suppose I shall not see Madame Ruskoi to-night?" Angela asked.

"No, not to-night; to-morrow morning. She desired me to see that you were comfortable. Madame is very considerate—very different," and she laughed and shook her head, "to monsieur. He is a regular tyrant; an overbearing, haughty man—detested and feared by all his dependents, and disliked by his equals. Poor madame has not a very happy life. They say," and Mrs. Elliot lowered her voice mysteriously, "that she was forced into the marriage by her parents. They were Poles, and to curry favour with the Czar, they obliged madame to marry M. Ruskoi, who is high in favour at Court. She was very beautiful when a girl, and—so they say, at least—deeply attached to her cousin, a young Polish Count. But here I am gossiping, and quite forgetting how tired you are. Good-night, my dear." She rose from her chair, and kissed the girl kindly. "Don't get up very early. Madame will not be visible before noon."

Tired though Angela was, it was long before she slept. The children's rooms were quite shut off from the rest of the house, but still, as Angela lay wide awake in her bed, the sounds of music and dancing and the tread of footsteps reached her ears through the silence, and continued far into the night. She went to sleep at last, but it was a disturbed sleep, full of

confused dreams. She did not awake until late next morning, when the maid brought her breakfast, and informed her that madame had awakened, and asked for her. Angela dressed herself hastily, and, not without some inward trepidation, followed the maid along the corridor to a door which led to madame's suite of rooms. Here they paused—a bell was rung, and the French maid appeared and conducted Angela to madame's boudoir.

"Madame will receive mademoiselle," the maid said, opening a door, and Angela, with her heart beating quickly, passed into the room.

What would madame say to her? How would she receive her? she wondered.

The room she entered was large and lofty, and furnished after a most luxurious fashion. Angela felt almost dazzled by the splendour which met her gaze on every side; the velvet hangings, the vases of lapis-lazuli, porphyry, malachite, the profusion of flowers, pictures, and objects of art.

The mistress of all this splendour was seated in an easy-chair near an exquisitely-painted stove. She was a handsome, fair woman, dressed in a morning-gown of ruby plush, bordered with rich, dark fur. On her head she wore a little cap of ruby plush and white lace, and her long fair hair hung in a thick plait down her back. Two children—a boy of seven and a girl of a year younger—were playing on a rug at her feet, and a pretty little child of four sat on her knee, and stared at Angela with solemn eyes. Madame looked up as Angela entered, smiled, and bowed graciously, but she did not rise from her seat, and there was a tinge of hauteur in her manner—gracious and winning though it was—as she pointed to a chair by her side.

"I regret much, Miss Belton, that I did not see you last evening," she said in a sweet, clear voice. "I was engaged with my guests, but I do trust that my people did make you comfortable." She spoke in English very slowly and carefully, and once she hesitated, and substituted a French word for the English. "Pray be seated."

She waved her hand towards a chair near her. Angela bowed deferentially, and took it.

"I was quite comfortable, madame. Mrs. Elliot was very kind," she said quietly.

"Ah, the good Elliot! Yes, she is ver

kind. Ah, I speak not the English well just now," madame went on with a charming smile. "You, mees, shall give me some lessons."

She turned to the children, who had suspended their play, and were staring at the new comer, and glided into French, which she spoke, like all well-educated Russians, with perfect ease and fluency.

"Nadine, my angel, Ivan, come; speak to mademoiselle."

Ivan, who was a handsome boy, with his mother's face, hair, and blue eyes, rose from the rug, and, marching up to Angela, stood in front of her chair, stared at her in silence for a moment, then put up his face and kissed her.

"Mademoiselle is pretty, maman—not like the cross, ugly Mdlle. Ferie. I shall love her," he said. "Nadine, come, embrace mademoiselle."

Madame smiled faintly.

"Ivan is like his father—he adores beauty," she said; and then she gave a sharp glance at Angela. "Paolo was right. She is too lovely," she said, half aloud and with a little sigh. "These two are your pupils, Miss Belton," she went on in a louder tone. "They spend this hour after breakfast with me. It is my only unoccupied time. I go so much into the world, and have so many engagements, that I have very little time to spare for my children."

As she spoke the door opened, and a tall, stout, rather disagreeable-looking man, whom Angela rightly concluded to be M. Ruskoï, entered. He spoke to his children in a rough, good-natured voice, and pulled little Nadine's curls, and all the time stared at Angela with a bold admiration in his deep-set eyes.

Madame had coloured vividly at his entrance, and Angela noticed that her brow contracted, and that she bit her lip nervously.

"This is Mdlle. Belton, my English governess, monsieur," she said hurriedly, in answer to her husband's enquiring look. "She arrived last evening."

Monsieur bowed in acknowledgment of Angela's low curtsy, and said a few courteous words respecting her journey, and trusted that she would not find the Russian climate too severe. The words were courteous enough, and so, to all appearance, was his manner, but there was an insolent admiration in his eyes and in the tone of his voice which irritated Angela. She felt the colour flush into her face again, and she

averted her eyes, and with difficulty prevented the anger which she really felt from becoming apparent in her voice, as she answered as briefly as possible his questions. She saw, too, that madame gave a quick look at her husband, that she bit her lip and frowned, and that her pale face first flushed and then grew a degree paler than before.

Indeed, it was so rarely that monsieur spoke civilly to a dependent that it was no wonder if the unusual courtesy he showed to Angela surprised his wife.

He fidgeted about the room, played with the children, and asked a few questions respecting madame's plans for the day; then, with another long look at Angela, went out of the room, banging the door after him.

Angela fancied that madame looked relieved when the door closed. She looked at Angela, opened her lips as if about to speak, hesitated, and then, sending the children to the other side of the room, bent forward and put her hand on Angela's arm.

"Mademoiselle, one word," she said in a quick, agitated voice; "they say that you are faithful. Be cautious also; above all"—and her voice grew very earnest—"trust no one in this house; there may be spies—one cannot tell. For no one but Paolo would I have run the risk."

For a moment the two women looked at each other intently. Then Angela smiled. She raised madame's hand to her lips.

"Madame may rely on my discretion," she said quietly.

Madame did not look altogether satisfied. She hesitated again, looked as if there was something else she wished but could not quite make up her mind to say, and finally turned away with a sigh, and resumed her seat.

"Nadine, ring the bell for Justine," she said.

And Angela, judging from the words that the interview was ended, rose from her chair.

"Have I your permission to retire, madame?" she asked.

Madame smiled graciously.

"Certainly, mademoiselle. Nadine—Ivan, go with mademoiselle. Be obedient, good children," she added, as her maid entered the room, and she smiled and bent her head in answer to Angela's deferential bow.

Three or four days passed. The weather was stormy and cold, and Angela and

the children were unable to stir outside the house. The days seemed very long and dull to Angela, shut up in her schoolroom with the children for her sole companions. They were bright and affectionate, and soon grew very fond of their governess and she of them; but she missed Nancie sadly. Mrs. Elliot used to bring her work sometimes into the schoolroom after the children were in bed, and talk to the young governess, and madame sent in books, and French and English newspapers; but still the time dragged sadly.

Angela had written both to Sir Noel and Nancie, but they were meagre, unsatisfactory letters; she scarcely knew what to put in them. Nancie, she knew, would expect a glowing account of her gaieties and dissipations, and would be much disappointed and disgusted at the short epistles which said so little about Angela's own doings, and were indeed almost entirely composed of questions and comments respecting home news and Nancie's own affairs. And it was still more difficult to write in her usual affectionate strain to Sir Noel. She sent these letters to the Princess di Capri, who had undertaken to post them, and to forward any that arrived for Angela to St. Petersburg.

Angela smiled sadly over the first she received from Nancie. It was full of questions about Paris and the Princess, and described, in Nancie's comical fashion, the awe and envy which the announcement that Angela was the guest of a "real live Princess", had awakened in the minds of some of their Barlaston friends. If Nancie only knew the truth! she thought.

She grew very tired and impatient as the days went on, and still no message or sign came to her from madame. Angela rarely saw her now, and then she would look into the schoolroom as she returned from her daily visit to the nursery, and say a few pleasant words to the young governess, and ask about the children's progress, but neither by word or sign did she allude to Angela's secret mission.

One evening, however, towards the end of the second week, she came into the nursery where Angela was talking to Mrs. Elliot. Little Nadine had complained of headache during the day, and Angela had sent her earlier than usual from the schoolroom. The child, who was very fond of her governess, had been restless and feverish all the evening, and Mrs. Elliot at last had sent a message to the schoolroom, asking if Angela would come into the nursery and

sit a little while by the child's bed. She had done so, and Nadine, soothed by her presence and her sweet voice, had fallen asleep with her fingers clasped tightly round Angela's hand.

Madame's fair face grew very tender and anxious as she looked at the sleeping child. She was to dine that evening at the house of the English Ambassador, and she was magnificently dressed in white satin and lace, and wore ornaments of diamonds and rubies. Very beautiful and stately madame looked, but her gleaming dress and flashing jewels contrasted oddly with her anxious face and the weary look in her blue eyes, as she bent over the bed and asked a few questions respecting the child's illness.

"Miss Nadine has not been well for a day or two, and this evening she was quite feverish. She could not rest until Miss Belton sang her to sleep. But I do not think you need be alarmed, madame; it is only a feverish cold."

Madame looked across the bed at Angela, and there was—so the girl thought—a peculiar expression in her eyes as she said, speaking, as she always did when using the English language, very slowly and distinctly:

"Miss Belton looks not so well to-night; she is pale and thin. I fear that our climate is too—how call you it?—too severe. Is it so, *ma chère*?"

Angela looked up quickly, and a significant look passed between the two women. Angela coloured brightly, and her heart bounded with delight and hope; but she forced herself to answer quietly:

"I sometimes fear so, madame. I should be sorry to leave the children, but——"

"Eh, well, let us trust you will not need," madame answered kindly. "We will not speak of it yet—it is too soon to judge. In a few days—a week"—she emphasised the word a little—"we shall know more. What think you, my good Elliot?"

Mrs. Elliot looked doubtful.

"Miss Belton looks rather pale, but the weather has been so bad, no doubt she feels the confinement to the house," she said.

"Doubtless that is so," madame assented quietly.

She bent and kissed her sleeping child, smiled and nodded a gracious good-night to Angela, then gathering her white furs round her shoulders, swept from the room. Mrs. Elliot looked after her with admiring eyes.

"How beautiful she is! But she does not look happy—does she, Miss Belton? Monsieur is very unkind to her, I know; I have heard him storming at her some times, more as if she was his serf than his wife. Ah, it is not riches alone that can bring happiness," Mrs. Elliot went on in a moralising tone, "or madame would be as happy as the day is long."

"Is monsieur so very rich, then?" Angela asked absently.

"Oh, immensely. He has large estates in Poland, and a silver-mine in the Altai Mountains, which yields an immense revenue," Mrs. Elliot answered.

She paused and looked significantly at Angela's thoughtful face.

"I have noticed lately, Miss Belton, during the past week, that monsieur has paid several visits to the schoolroom. Take my advice, my dear; don't encourage them."

"I do not," Angela looked up with startled eyes, "but I cannot prevent them. He rarely takes much notice of me, and he seems very fond of the children."

"It is only lately that he has developed this affection," Mrs. Elliot answered dryly. "He never visited the schoolroom in Mdlle. Ferie's time. But she was past her first youth, and plain and unattractive beside, while you are young and beautiful. So take my advice, my dear. You can't shut the door against monsieur, but have as little to do with him as you can; and if he comes very often, inform madame of his visits."

"Yes, I will."

Angela spoke very absently. She was thinking of madame's words and significant look. A week! Only another week, and perhaps her mission might be accomplished, and she might be on her way home again. At the thought her eyes brightened, and the colour flushed to her cheeks. She had not liked to complain of monsieur's frequent visits to the schoolroom, but all the same they had annoyed her extremely. True, as she said, he rarely addressed many remarks to her, but he would talk to the children and watch her as she sat at work or with her book, with a bold admiration in his eyes which made her feel hot, and angry, and ashamed all at once, which yet she could not openly resent.

Two or three times also he had brought her flowers, and once the bouquet had been in a jewelled holder. Angela had quietly removed the flowers, and returned the

holder to him with a steady look and a quiet, "Merci, monsieur." The incident had not impressed her much at the time, but now, at Mrs. Elliot's warning words, it recurred to her, and with it the remembrance of monsieur's angry look and disagreeable laugh as he took the holder from the table.

"Ah, well, it is not of much consequence," Angela thought. "In a short time—a week, or a fortnight at most—I shall be safe at home again."

She sat up rather late that night, for she felt excited and restless, and in no mood for sleep. The great house was unusually still and silent; monsieur and madame were dining out, the servants were shut up in their own quarters, and Mrs. Elliot had complained of headache, and gone early to bed. Angela, absorbed in her own thoughts, did not notice this unusual quiet for some time; but by-and-by the silence grew oppressive, and she was conscious of a nervous, uncomfortable feeling quite foreign to her nature slowly stealing over her. She was just about to leave the schoolroom, and go into her bed-chamber, when she was startled by the sound of loud voices and heavy footsteps on the staircase. She felt no alarm at first, for the children's rooms were quite distinct from the rest of the house, but her heart throbbed nervously when she heard the outer door of the corridor open and close noisily, and listened to the heavy footsteps which approached and paused by the schoolroom-door.

She rose hurriedly from her seat, and looked eagerly towards the door. Someone outside fumbled at the handle with uncertain fingers; then the door opened, and monsieur, unsteady of gait, and flushed of aspect, entered the room, followed by an older, taller man.

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ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION

Supported solely by Voluntary Contributions.



THE PRINCE OF WALES AND THE LIFE-BOAT SERVICE.

(Extract from Speech of His Royal Highness at a recent Annual Meeting.)

"THE NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION having been founded in 1824 has now reached its 60th anniversary, and I think you all will agree with me that there is no Institution throughout our country which is of greater importance or which more demands our sympathy and assistance. From our geographical position as a sea-girt isle, and from the vast colonies which we have acquired, the mass of ships that travel to and fro and reach our islands is almost too vast even to know what their numbers are; but they naturally encounter tempests, the result of which is shipwreck and loss of life, especially to that valuable and important community—the fishermen upon our coasts. The risks that they run from the beginning to the end of the year must be well known to all. It is specially to save their lives, and not only theirs, but those of all who travel on the sea, that this great national Institution has been founded. It is strange to find that though a great many improvements have taken place in navigation and in the different scientific inventions which have been made, there is no doubt that an increase of shipwrecks annually takes place. It must have been of interest to all who visited the Fisheries Exhibition of last year to see there the models of boats and the contrivances for fishing, as well as the various apparatus for saving life. It must be patent to everybody that a society such as the ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION is an absolute necessity. Look at what it has done. Since its existence close on 31,000 lives have been saved. Already this year, though we are only in the middle of March, more than 300 lives have been saved, and last year nearly 1000. I may also mention that we have 274 life-boats. It is well known to everybody through the medium of the press that great gallantry is displayed by the coxswains and crews of these boats; it is so well known indeed that I need not attempt to engross attention on that subject. But one thing must be borne in mind; though we all admit that this is a national and important Institution, at the same time it is entirely supported by voluntary contributions. Therefore I must most urgently ask that this fact may be well pondered over, and I must impress on all the great necessity of keeping the Institution up and maintaining it with adequate funds. A large annual income is of course necessary, and I may mention that to keep a life-boat station in good condition entails expenses amounting to about £70 per annum. The PRINCESS OF WALES who has lately become a patroness of this Institution, shares with me, I need hardly say, in all the views I entertain upon this important subject; our hearts on all occasions are with those brave and gallant men who go out in the life-boats to rescue their countrymen and others in all weathers and at all times of the day or night. As I have said before, this Institution is a thoroughly national and useful one, and if ably conducted and managed in the way it has been heretofore I feel convinced it will ever continue to flourish."

Donations and Annual Subscriptions are thankfully received by the Secretary, Charles Dibdin, Esq., at the Institution, 14 John Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.; by the Bankers of the Institution, Messrs. Coutts and Co., 59 Strand; Messrs. Herries, Farquhar, and Co., 16 St. James's Street; Messrs. Hoare, 37 Fleet Street, London; by all the other Bankers in the United Kingdom; and by all the Life-boat Branches.—November, 1885.

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION.

SUPPORTED SOLELY BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS.

Patroness—Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen.

Vice-Patroness—HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS OF WALES.

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Chairman—EDWARD BIRKBECK, Esq., M.P., V.P.

Deputy Chairman—COLONEL FITZ-ROY CLAYTON, V.P.

LIFE-BOAT SERVICES IN 1884.

<i>Alabama</i> , barque, of Helsingborg	12	<i>Girvan</i> Lifeboat brought ashore a man who had been injured on Alls Craig.	<i>Sarah Jane</i> , ketch, of Bridgewater	3
<i>Albert</i> , brigantine, of Carlisle—saved vessel and.....	5	<i>Alisa</i> Craig	<i>Sarnian Gem</i> , schooner, of Guernsey—rendered assistance.	
<i>Alexander</i> , sch., of Beaumaris ..	4	<i>Guide</i> , brig, of Brazil—rendered assistance.	<i>Scotia</i> , barque, of Sunderland—assisted to save vessel and	12
<i>Allegiance</i> , ship—rendered some assistance.		<i>Haab</i> , barque, of Moss.....	<i>Septimus</i> , brigantine, of Belfast	4
<i>Alma</i> , Norwegian barque	12	<i>Hannah</i> , schooner, of Great Yarmouth—saved vessel.	<i>Silkworth</i> , brig, of Sunderland...	7
<i>Annie</i> , schooner, of Wick—assisted to save vessel and	5	<i>Hawthorn</i> , s.s., of London—rendered assistance.	<i>Slaters</i> , brig, of Belfast	8
<i>Antelope</i> , smack, of Aberystwyth—saved vessel and	2	<i>Hebe</i> , schooner, of Cork—rendered assistance.	<i>Scandinavian</i> , s.s., of Gothenburg—assisted to save vessel and ...	16
<i>Arbitrator</i> , trawler, of Wexford	5	<i>Helene</i> , barque, of Bremen.....	<i>Sovereign</i> , brig, of Whitty.....	8
Arbroath fishing boats—remained in attendance.		<i>Herrington</i> , barque, of Whitty—assisted to save vessel and	<i>Speedwell</i> , s.s., of Hull.....	14
<i>Ben Avon</i> , s.s., of Aberdeen—rendered assistance.		<i>James Garfield</i> , dandy, of Ipswich—saved vessel and	<i>Star</i> , barge, of Rochester	3
<i>Bjornstjerna Bjornson</i> , Norwegian barque	11	<i>Jane Sophia</i> , schooner, of Plymouth—remained by vessel.	<i>Storm King</i> , tug, of Montrose ...	2
<i>Blackwall</i> , barque, of London—rendered assistance.		<i>Jenny Lind</i> , schooner, of Wexford	<i>Success</i> , s.s., of Sunderland.....	4
<i>Breeze</i> , brig, of Blyth—assisted to save vessel and	7	<i>Jessie</i> , barge, of Rochester—saved vessel.	<i>Tagus</i> , barque, of Shoreham—rendered assistance.	
<i>Brilliant</i> , schooner, of Fowey—remained by vessel.		<i>John and Ann</i> , schooner, of Aberystwyth	<i>Thorley</i> , brig, of Hartlepool—brought ashore vessel's crew of 8 men from Swin Middle Light-ship.	
<i>Carlton</i> , steiner, of Cardiff	20	<i>Juan de la Vega</i> , brigantine, of Corunna—remained by vessel.	<i>Three Sisters</i> , smack, of Cardigan	3
<i>Caterina</i> , smack, of Boulogne—remained by vessel.		<i>Juno</i> , yawl, of Beaumaris	<i>Town of Liverpool</i> , barque, of Whitty—rendered assistance.	
<i>Chalciope</i> , brig, of Fleetwood.....	3	<i>Lady Dalhousie</i> , steamer, of Greenock.....	<i>Trial</i> , schooner, of Donaghadee—rendered some assistance.	
<i>Christine</i> , schooner, of Svendborg	5	<i>Leonar</i> , barque, of Hamburg—rendered assistance.	<i>Unda</i> , Norwegian brigantine.....	6
Cullercoats fishing cobs—rendered assistance.		<i>Loch Ness</i> , s.s., of Dundee	<i>Usk</i> , Russian barque—remained by vessel.	
<i>Daniel Yorke</i> , wherry of Dundalk	4	<i>Loreley</i> , barque, of Arendal—assisted to save vessel and.....	<i>Vanguard</i> , steam-trawler, of Sunderland—rendered assistance.	
<i>Daring</i> , ketch, of Barnstaple—saved vessel and.....	4	<i>Margaret Alice Dale</i> , smack	<i>Venus</i> , sloop, of Guernsey—assisted to save vessel and	3
<i>Delke Rickmers</i> , ship, of Bremerhaven	25	<i>Mary & Ann</i> , schooner, of Dundalk	<i>Vidonia</i> , barquentine, of Bridport—remained by vessel.	
<i>Depositor</i> , ship, of Halifax, N.S.	23	<i>Mazina</i> , barque, of Swansea—rendered assistance.	<i>Vixen</i> , smack, of Dublin	4
<i>Duke of Westminster</i> , steamer, of London	73	<i>Mayflower</i> , s.s., of Glasgow	<i>Wave</i> , yacht, of Liverpool	3
<i>Earl Beaconsfield</i> , four mast ship, of Glasgow	33	<i>Micpah</i> , schooner, of Dover—remained by vessel.	<i>Welsh Prince</i> , s.s., of Newport... 40	
<i>Ebba</i> , barque, of Liverpool—rendered assistance.		<i>Morford and Trubey</i> , barque, of Aberdeen.....	<i>William Henry</i> , smack, of Runcoth	4
<i>Edina</i> , brigantine, of Liverpool—saved vessel and	3	<i>Mystery</i> , schooner, of Portsmouth, saved vessel and	Total lives saved by Life-boats in 1884, in addition to 18 vessels 633	
<i>Egmont</i> , schooner, of Cork—rendered assistance.		<i>Nereus</i> , barque, of Liverpool.....	During the same period the Institution granted rewards for saving lives by fishing and other boats.....	159
<i>Eliza</i> , schooner, of Penzance.....	5	<i>Newbiggin and N. Sunderland</i> fishing-boats—rendered assistance.		
<i>Elizabeth Ann</i> , sch., of Carnarvon, and schooner belonging to Runcorn—saved vessels and	1	<i>Paola</i> , schooner, of Hamburg—saved vessel and crew	Total of lives saved in 1884.....	792
<i>Ellen</i> , smack, of Milford	3	<i>Petrel</i> , schooner, of Montrose—remained by vessel.	Ditto in 1885 (to 31st Oct.).....	427
<i>Ellen</i> , smack, of Newport	2	<i>Rapid</i> , smack, of Cardigan.....		
<i>Embla</i> , barque, of Stavanger	10	<i>Regian</i> , s.s., of Liverpool	Total of Lives saved in 1884 and 1885 (to 31st Oct.)	1,218
<i>Emily</i> , steamer, of Sunderland ...	9	<i>Richard Cobden</i> , schooner, of Swansea		
<i>Fairway</i> , s.s., of London, rendered assistance.		<i>St. Olaf</i> , brigantine, of Mandal... 7		
<i>Flying Foam</i> , ship, Liverpool ...	11	<i>Samarang</i> , barque, of Newcastle 13		

During the year 1884 the ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION expended £42,787 in connection with its 269 Life-boat Establishments on the Coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in addition to having contributed to the saving of 792 persons from various Shipwrecks on our Coasts, for which services it granted 6 Silver Medals and Claps, 9 Votes of Thanks, and pecuniary Rewards, including grants to widows and orphans of Lifeboatmen killed on duty, to the amount of £5,000.

It should be specially noted that the Life-boat crews, excepting when remunerated by the owners of vessels for property salvage services, are paid by the Institution for their efforts, whether successful or not, in saving life.

The average expense of a Life-boat Station is £1,000, which includes £650 for the Life-boat and her equipment, including Life-belts for the crew, and Transporting-carriage for the Life-boat, and £350 for the Boat-house (average cost). The approximate annual expense of maintaining a Life-boat Station is £70.

[P.T.O.]